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School as a Diverse Place

Bachelor Thesis

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Intercultural Teacher Education

2020

University of Oulu

Faculty of Education

School as a Diverse Place (Laura Putkinen, Pinja Rajala)

Bachelor's thesis, 44 pages

August 2020

The goal for this bachelor's thesis was to understand how school is experienced as a place and what other factors influence it. This research combines theories from both human geography and education. Our interest to research school as a place came from our minor studies of geography, as there we completed a small research on home as a place. The main research question on this paper is "what makes a school a place?"

This thesis is completed as a literature review and working together in cooperation has been a big part of the process. School as a place has not been researched much, and that led to collecting literature and data from various sources and combining knowledge. Working together has brought reliability to this research, as well as made discussion and critical analyzing possible. Sources have been selected carefully to gain as reliable knowledge as possible.

The formation of place in a school has multiple meanings. For space to turn into place physical and social environments, as well as personal perceptions, are needed. In the school environment the physical building serves as a physical space that is shaped and affected by students, teachers, parents, other staff, and society. How much these factors affect the formation of place depends on the individual's perceptions, experiences, and expectations of school. Therefore, the experience of school as a place is personal and constantly changing.

At first in this bachelor's thesis relevant place theories are introduced. Also, school's physical usage of space and its effect on the experience of place is discussed. In the next part safety, social relationships and learning are reflected with the help of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Hierarchy of needs is used to address the role of different levels in enabling learning. Likewise, sense of place is formed by multiple elements that impact one another. It is important to understand different expectations set to the school by students, teachers, parents, and society, in order to interpret and discuss school holistically from different perspectives.

Keywords: Maslow's hierarchy of needs, place, purpose of school, sense of place, space

Oulun yliopisto

Kasvatustieteiden tiedekunta

Koulu monimuotoisena paikkana (Laura Putkinen, Pinja Rajala)

Kandidaatintyö, 44 sivua

Elokuu 2020

Kandidaatintutkimuksen tavoitteena on ymmärtää, kuinka koulu koetaan paikkana ja mitkä eri tekijät siihen vaikuttavat. Tutkimuksessa on hyödynnetty teorioita kulttuurimaantieteen sekä kasvatustieteen aloilta. Mielenkiintomme tutkia koulua paikkana muotoutui maantieteen sivuaineopintojen yhteydessä, kun toteutimme kyselytutkimuksen kodista paikkana. Tutkimuskysymyksemme tässä kandidaatintutkielmassa on ”Mikä tekee koulusta paikan?”

Kandidaatintutkimus on toteutettu kirjallisuuskatsauksena, sekä yhteistutkijuus on ollut vahvasti läsnä. Koulua paikkana ei ole laajasti tutkittu, mikä tuli esiin tiedonhankinnassa, johtaen tiedon yhdistelemiseen eri lähteistä. Yhteistutkijuus on tuonut tutkimukseen luotettavuutta, sekä mahdollistanut keskustelun ja tiedon kriittisen analysoinnin. Lähteiden valinta on ollut harkittua ja lähteiden luotettavuutta on arvioitu.

Koulun paikkakokemuksen muotoutuminen on monisyinen prosessi. Tilan muuttuminen paikaksi vaatii fyysisen ympäristön lisäksi sosiaalisen vuorovaikutuksen, sekä henkilökohtaiset tulkinnat. Koulumaailmassa koulurakennus toimii fyysisenä tilana, mitä muovaavat oppilaat, opettajat, vanhemmat, koulun muu henkilökunta sekä yhteiskunnan vaikutukset. Se, kuinka voimakkaasti ja millä tavalla edellä mainitut tekijät vaikuttavat paikan kokemukseen, on riippuvainen yksilön omista tulkinnoista, kokemuksista ja odotuksista. Täten kokemus koulusta paikkana on henkilökohtainen ja alati muuttuva.

Kandidaatintutkimuksessa käsittelemme aluksi tutkimuksen kannalta oleellisia paikkateorioita, sekä koulun fyysisiä tilaratkaisuja ja niiden vaikutusta paikan kokemiseen. Seuraavassa osiossa reflektioimme turvallisuutta, sosiaalisia suhteita ja oppimista suhteessa Maslown tarvehierarkiaan. Tarvehierarkian avulla käsittelemme perustarpeiden, sekä muiden tasojen roolia oppimisen mahdollistajana. Samalla tavalla paikkakokemus muodostuu useista päällekkäisistä, toisiaan sivuavista elementeistä. On tärkeää ymmärtää oppilaiden, opettajien, vanhempien ja yhteiskunnan erilaiset odotukset koululle, jotta koulua voidaan tulkita ja käsitellä kokonaisvaltaisesti eri näkökulmista.

Avainsanat: koulun tehtävä, Maslown tarvehierarkia, paikka, paikkakokemus, tila

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1. Introduction

Teaching happens in both time and place and therefore school is more than just a building, it withholds people's experiences of growth (Hyry-Beihammer & Autti, 2013). When the topic of education is discussed often the term place is forgotten, however, place does have an influence on one's wellbeing (Hyry-Beihammer, Hiltunen & Estola, 2014). Agnew, Shelley and Pringle (2003) explain, that place is created of physical and social environment combined with individuals' perceptions. Place is an interesting phenomenon as while interaction between human and place goes two ways, one can never return to the same place, because the place never stays the same due to people and the culture around it (Hyry-Beihammer, Hiltunen & Estola, 2014). Therefore, students, teachers, parents, business and those making decisions regarding school system are all having unique perspectives to look for the meaning, role and aims of the school (Launonen & Pulkkinen, 2004). The multidimensional phenomenon of place raised our interest and consequently we chose to research school as a place in our bachelor's thesis.

Our aim was to find out how school is described and seen from the perspective of place. In order to understand the phenomenon, this research has been divided into four main parts, first chapter opens the background of this research. Second chapter is focused on explaining the meaning of space and place as well as describing school's transformation from space into a place. The next part concentrates more on the aspect of school being a place, how school is felt and experienced. Lastly in this research the issue of school and society, how their clashing interpretations about school as a place work together, will be discussed and presented. Throughout this thesis we are also bringing up the Finnish context and how school is seen as a place, especially in Finland. In addition, many of our sources are written in the Finnish context.

We chose this research topic because we both study geography as a minor and there we have been introduced to the concept of diverse places, in addition, we completed a small research on "home as a place". We found it to be interesting and wanted to bring this aspect into our education studies and take a look at school from a different, not so usual perspective. Our own school paths are very different, but we both have had unique experiences and feelings of a school as a meaningful place.

School as a place has not been researched much in Finland or globally. Therefore, we were keen on searching more and conducting a research, as we believe this to be an important matter to understand. Discussing about school as place is a present topic as well, because due to the

current pandemic COVID-19 (Kokkonen & Myöhänen, 2020); schools have been forced into remote learning and this has changed the formal learning to happen in a home environment instead of school. This has raised discussion as there has been debates regarding the role of school in society and people's lives.

When we began this research, we hoped to find out if school and place do have a strong connection to one another. In addition, we hoped to get multiple and significant aspects for school as a place. We desired to discover how the physical space is transformed into a place in a school environment. And how big of an influence the environment and society have in the formation of school as a place. As well as understanding how people's experiences of school impact their creation of school as a place and what factors may play part in this.

1.1. Aims and Methods of Research

The aim of this research was to gain knowledge on school as a place; to understand the diverse aspects of it and how school can be understood through experiences of it. Idea was to combine previous knowledge and research to show the importance of space and place in schools. We hoped that this research would offer a new perspective to this under researched field in Finland and show the importance of this viewpoint.

Many feelings are experienced at school and therefore, it would be important to have a deeper understanding of the feelings that are experienced in the school environment (Gordon, 1999, 110). Internalizing these various feelings, either consciously or unconsciously, enables understanding on how the formal teaching and learning are transformed in a social physical interaction happening in a classroom (Gordon, 1999, 110). We believe it to be important to understand the space school offers as it is a place where students spend a lot of time in and therefore it is full of potential that should be understood. Leach (2005) carries on stating that it is important to understand the performative discourses and meaning that buildings hold. Therefore, our main research question is:

- What makes a school a place?

To understand the foundation of this research, the key concepts and terminology is explained as they are from both the educational and geographical field. Terminology regarding place and space are from the field of human geography, while Maslow's hierarchy of needs belongs to the educational science, as well as all along present school context. As place withholds a diverse

meaning, it made the research question very broad and therefore it needed a clear focus point on this paper. To support compose this research and to keep the focus, some guiding questions were presented:

- What are place and space? How are they presented in a physical school environment?
- What aspects in school are important in the creation of place?
- How does society impact school as a place?

This research was based on a literature review. In a literature review the aim is to complete a literature research focusing on a chosen topic (Rowley & Slack, 2004). There was no questionnaires or interviews for collecting data. Instead a large range of reliable sources were used to gather the needed information for this review. Rowley and Slack (2004) forewarned us that one of the most difficult parts of composing a literature review was gathering reliable knowledge. Therefore, we have taken time to find reliable sources that are academic peer-reviewed research and literature.

Rowley and Slack (2004) introduce five significant steps into writing a literature review: “scanning documents, making notes, and structuring the literature review, writing the literature review, and building the bibliography”. These steps were followed in the process of writing this review. The research began with gathering information and deepening our knowledge on the topics that we wanted to focus on in this thesis. Hart (2018, 27) reminded us that in order to accomplish gathering these valid literatures, both history and current research as well as recent debate needed to be acquainted to. After collecting reliable literature regarding our topic, we were able to start writing the literature review. During the writing process we had many discussions regarding the topic, as we challenged each other to think outside the box and broaden our perspectives. Working together has also motivated us to study and discuss more of the topic. Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara (2009, 233) introduce the researcher triangulation (*tutkijatriangulaatio*), meaning of studying the phenomenon in collaboration with other researchers to increase the reliability. In writing this literature review, we have implemented researcher triangulation to have higher quality in this research.

The idea of a literature review is to gather knowledge on whether further research on the matter is needed (Rowley & Slack, 2004). This aim set by Rowley and Slack (2004) have been fulfilled in this research and possible further research topics will be presented in the discussion section. Our plan is to extend this research into our master’s thesis. Hart (2018, 172) emphasizes that,

all the approaches, theories and main concepts that are relevant to the research need to be clearly identified, understood, and critically evaluated. As our research is a literature review, it must be kept focused as Rowley and Slack (2004) remind. We have put a lot of thought and effort into creating a clear and easily followed structure to this thesis. Also, attention has been paid to the simple but informative introduction of various theories, especially because we have combined concepts from human geography and education. We aspired to create a whole research with a logical structure while using critically evaluated sources.

1.2. Previous Research

All research needs to be based on previous knowledge on the researched subject (Rowley & Slack, 2004). Place as a phenomenon has been widely researched in the field of human geography and sociology as well as in architecture and environmental psychology, when exploring the relationship between humans and the environment (Patterson & Williams, 2005). Also, schools as a community have been broadly researched in education context (Osterman, 2000). However, these phenomena have not been researched together that extensively, at least as of now.

In Finland Hyry-Beihammer and Autti (2013) have researched the formation on locality in small rural schools in Northern Finland (*Pienkoulun ja paikallisuuden rakentumisia pohjoisella maaseudulla*, 2004). In that research the focus is on how school place has an effect on students' formation of sense of locality. Place-based education is a phenomenon that has been researched by many researchers for example by Hyvärinen (2014) and Smith (2002). As noted, previous research has focused on the location of the school and how space is used in the school context leading to the place-based education and utilizing it into pedagogy. In addition, Meyer (1971) researched how the space of school, whether it is open- spaced or traditional, affects teachers' job satisfaction, attitudes, and sense of influence. Here, it can be seen that the phenomenon of place and school is not a completely new perspective in educational research.

In this research we aim to have a fresh perspective and understand the polysemic nature of the school by taking a deeper look into meanings that people give to the school and how those interpretations are making it a place. That is especially important for the teachers as well as to the decision makers, because school is a place that unites people from different backgrounds, and they come to school with different expectations.

2. Moving from space to place in school

Place and space are two important terms used in this research. In everyday life their meaning however is easily confused as Tuan (2001, 3) mentions. According to Agnew, Shelley and Pringle (2003) place withholds three aspects which make it meaningful. First one being *location*, that is the geographical area of the place (Agnew, Shelley & Pringle, 2003). Agnew, Shelley and Pringle (2003) continue to the second aspect that is the *locale*, which refers to the material setting, where social interaction and relations take place, whereas third aspect being *sense of place* is subjective and dependent on the person defining place. People have an emotional attachment to the place and their own experiences space their approach on the place (Agnew, Shelley & Pringle, 2003). Agnew, Shelley & Pringle (2003) conclude by saying that when all these elements are together, the specific location with its own environment moulded by individuals' interpretations, is called a place.

Easthope (2004) explains that place withholds a social aspect within, and it is affected by physical, economic, and social realities. It has been found out that places have changing identities that are carried out by the following three possibilities: People change along with the change of place; places change due to human behaviour and places may also change by themselves (Hyrý-Belhammer, Hiltunen & Estola, 2014). A person creates the place through imagining, telling, experiencing, understanding, interpreting, and observing it, not to forget the physical aspects that are important when discussing place (Easthope, 2004). Hyry-Belhammer, Hiltunen and Estola (2014, 5) add up that while a person creates a place, at the same time stories, history, and culture of the place change.

Gieryn (2000, 464-465) reminds that the borders of a place can vary a lot when it comes to its size, varying from small to very large scale, for example both a chair and a city are places. Gieryn (2000, 464-465) continue by saying that a place turns into a space when its sentimental value is excluded. Tuan (2001) adds to the definition that space is more abstract than a place and loads of expectations and values are connected to places and therefore they cannot be seen as neutral spaces. Also, politics and power can be gained due to the shape of the place (Hyrý-Belhammer, Hiltunen & Estola, 2014); and as Stedman (2003) says, one can like or dislike the place.

Through Gustafson's Three-Pole Triangular Model (see Figure 1) Lien (2009) demonstrates the dependence people have to their surrounding during their life span. It consists of three main identity groups that are self, others and environment. Lien (2009) continues explaining that a

place can fall under any of the poles mentioned, or to the spectrum between them depending on the individuals' experiences. Therefore, in the model the formation of identity is divided under the following categories: Self, self-others, others, others-environment, environment, environment-self and self-others-environment (Lien, 2009). The model aims to define how experiences in a specific place impact the sense of place; individuals' personal experiences alone or in relation to the environment, or to other people, can have an effect on how person's sense of place is formed (Lien, 2009). The model suggests that some perceptions are formed on a basis of shared, collective experiences within the members in the community. According to this theory, the sense of place is seen as a dynamic process that is dependent on individuals' relations with themselves, others, and the environment (Lien, 2009).

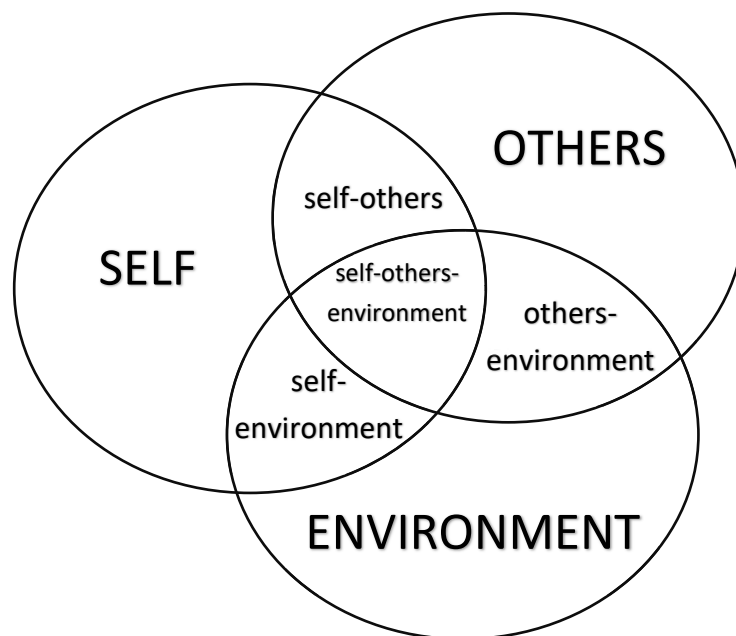


Figure 1. Gustafson's Three-Pole Triangular Model, Lien (2009).

Lien (2009) explains that Gustafson's place theory defines human beings with the help of the environment, how humans are dependent of their environment. For a place to gain its meaning it needs to be personal and recognisable to the individual, a place may gain a new meaning as time goes on and person's relation to it changes (Lien, 2009). This makes defining place a process in which individuals have an active role and their participation is in the key role as they are not only defining one specific place, but they also find common features within different places (Lien, 2009). Tuan (2001) and Stedman (2003) introduce that sense of place is formed

based on the symbolic factor of the setting; the physical aspect by itself does not influence the feeling, instead individuals' interpretations and meanings that they have created to the certain place. Agnew, Shelley & Pringle (2003) continue that sense of place is subjective and emotional connection to the place.

Stedman (2003) discusses that place attachment is a positive bond that is formed between humans and their surroundings, it takes shape in certain circumstances depending on the place and the nature of the person. They believe that sense of place can be divided into place attachment and place satisfaction, where attachment and satisfaction have different meanings (Stedman, 2003). Stedman (2003) continues explaining that one can be satisfied with a place but at the same time does not feel attached to it. In place attachment the focus is on the feeling of belonging somewhere; does the certain place hold importance to the person and to what extent (Stedman, 2003).

2.1. School as a Physical Space

Even though schools are different, and they vary from small village schools to huge complexes of thousands of students, same features are common to most of them. Tapaninen (2006) asserts that small schools are easier to familiarise with which makes them feel more secure, bigger schools can also be scaled so that they are easy to navigate in. Gordon (1999, 101) argues that usually schools can be identified to be schools even though they are not identical. Based on our experiences, we can nothing but agree with Gordon (1999) as schools that we have come across with, tend to have classrooms, corridors, staffrooms, libraries, a gym hall, toilets, and a playground for pupils. Next, we will discuss why these various physical aspects are linked to our understanding of school and what purpose they serve in helping to facilitate learning.

School can be seen as a physical place that includes the school building with the school yard as well as the architecture, the age of the building and the surrounding (Savolainen, 2001). Perkiö-Mäkelä (2006) carries on arguing that the space in schools has a very important role in creating well-functioning and succeeding school environments. Perkiö-Mäkelä (2006) continues that in order for the school environment to be efficient, it should be well organized and comfortable. Noise, temperature, air conditioning, lighting as well as biological and chemical factors are all combined in the creation of the physical atmosphere of the school (Savolainen, 2001). Perkiö-Mäkelä (2006) adds to the discussion that the furniture used in the school should be easily

moved and re-enssembled, also the size of the pupils' tables and chairs are encouraged to be appropriate for their size providing ergonomic work environment for pupils and staff, also so called stand around tables are encouraged and good alteration for sitting. Adjustability makes the environment supportive and comfortable for pupils and teachers (Perkiö-Mäkelä, 2006).

Schools are built in different decades and the ongoing perceptions on teaching and learning have led to different solutions in the general layout in order to fulfil the objectives of school at that time (Gordon, 1999, 101). Nowadays inclusive teaching and flexible school environments are emphasized as the school buildings and teaching methods should consider diverse pupils with their individual needs (Vanas, 2019). By making the school an unobstructed environment, it is being more inclusive as everyone can get into the school and use the space regardless of possible disabilities (Nevala, 2006).

There are differences in how boys and girls occupy the spaces in the school. According to Gordon (1999, 110-111) boys tend to be in the centre of the space whereas girls are more on the sides of the same space, thus girls use less of the space of the classroom than boys and when girls are using it, they have certain aims in mind such as getting paper or washing hands. If girls' behaviours change in the space it is more likely to be recognized because in the usual circumstances' girls are seen to be quieter and more inconspicuous compared to the boys, so loud or otherwise space occupying girls raise attention in the school environment (Gordon, 1999, 106).

2.2. Turning Rooms into Classrooms and Specific Places

Schools are designed to have enough working-, gathering-, break- and social space for different employees who work in the school environment (Tapaninen, 2006). But what is essential for the comfort and efficiency needed among those people and in school, differs from the person whose relation to the school environment is being analysed (Perkiö-Mäkelä, 2006). Tapaninen (2006) has focused on the needs of a teacher in the physical school environment, that does not include only the classroom where formal learning is expected to take place, but also staff room is important for the teachers' wellbeing. For classrooms to be suitable for the teacher, it must have tables, a working chair, surfaces, and space to store items mentions Tapaninen (2006). Whereas Perkiö-Mäkelä (2006) describes that the staff room for the gatherings should have separate kitchen, eating, relaxing and phone spaces as all these factors increase the wellbeing of teachers. Perkiö-Mäkelä (2006) continues by encouraging schools to design the environment

and working atmosphere in cooperation with the teachers, so it would be suitable for them, as it helps in their teaching and thus in fulfilling the purpose of school. At the very beginning of starting to build a working space it is important to ask why the spaces are being built and for what purpose and it would be important to have teacher's expertise already in this phase, unfortunately teachers are often brought to help after the big decisions are already made and big changes are no longer an option (Perkiö-Mäkelä, 2006).

Gordon (1999, 101) demonstrates that older schools located in the cities are quite massive, with restricted environments and have a multilayer hierarchy, while the more modern schools tend to be lower, light buildings and blend in with the surrounding environment. Gordon (1999, 101) suggested that in older schools the hierarchy between students and teachers were demonstrated by having the teachers table at the front middle of the class and on a platform. Whereas in the modern classroom the teachers table may be located at a corner or at the side, which does not emphasise the teacher's power as much (Gordon, 1999, 101). These decisions in the physical structures of the school reflect the current pedagogical approaches and purposes that the school is supposed to serve as Perkiö-Mäkelä (2006) mentioned that schools should consult teachers so the school will be well-functioning at the present day.

The school premises present a stage for both the informal and formal school function; however, it has a broader meaning with being a part of the social and cultural functions (Gordon, 1999, 101). Gordon (1999, 101) demonstrates that the space can be modified while it can also be limiting and offering different possibilities, as the classrooms can be personalised with the order of tables, art on the walls, plants, removing walls, adding audio-visual devices, and having learning materials. How the space is used can be discussed between the teacher and students, as both teachers and students are to work in the same space (Gordon, 1999, 101).

According to Enqvist (1987) the physical school environment is divided into hard and soft decoration. Classroom with plain walls and necessary furniture represents the hard aspect and can depress pupils and lead for negative emotions, whereas room that is decorated with plants, art, and colourful students works, stimulates, and adds up positive feelings (Enqvist, 1987). Therefore, aesthetic environment affects the school's users' wellbeing and place identity.

As the physical space of the school building is created, it serves as a physical operational environment with its own needs for all the diverse needs and functions of the school community: Relationships, timetables, planning and everyday activities (Tapaninen, 2006). Tapaninen (2006) continues that the building is making it possible to navigate and determine

the behaviour in schools, but it might also limit it. Gordon (1999, 104) completes that many events that take place in the space of school, are guided by routines but can also be unexpected. Thus, the hidden curriculum that is highly related to the building, affects the users of the school in one way or another (Tapaninen, 2006). The hidden curriculum and the physical building impact the users whether they like it or not and are often unconscious to the affects (Tapaninen, 2006). Tapaninen (2006) introduces time-space path (aikatilapolku) that is a crucial part of the school, meaning that a space may be the wrong space to be in at a certain time and on another time the exact same space is where to be. This is done by having specific spaces that have their own purpose, like the cafeteria for eating, this time-space path is constructed by school rules and timetables that put an expectation to the pupils to obey (Tapaninen, 2006). Hohti and Karlsson (2012) continue by emphasizing the necessity of the time-space paths as they ease the chaos, increase the feeling of safety, and make planning possible. Overall Tapaninen (2006) states that the physical school building has a significant role in the school satisfaction, well-being in teaching, and learning outcomes.

Ellis (2005) reminds that schools and classrooms are not just the walls and furniture, but rather places that are formed and developed with the help of various identities of different places that people bring in when they inhabit the space, for example teacher and pupils create the experiences and feeling of classroom together in the school premises. Those experiences mould the environment and the environment reshapes both the individuals', and groups' sense of place as Lien (2005) introduced in the Gustafson's Three-Pole Triangular Model (see Figure 1). Lien (2005) emphasises the importance to notice that environment, self, and others are at the same time separate aspects as well as related to one another and it is very difficult to draw a line between them. Also, the needs and limitations of the individuals, pupils, teachers, and the physical space together create a dynamic relationship that is connecting and creating a sense of community in the school spaces (Gordon, 1999, 102). Also, the architecture of the place is often linked with cultural identity as the connection between the built environment and identity has been acknowledged (Leach, 2005).

2.3. School Buildings in Finland

It has been presented that the school buildings have not changed significantly in Finland during its history (Tapaninen, 2006). Tapaninen (2006) continues by stating that the law does not state what size the school building should be; however, it is usually suggested that in smaller

buildings comfort and sense of safety are better compared to a large building. This is supported by Gordon (1999, 103) as they mention that it becomes easier to work in the school surrounding when the space seems to become smaller. First recognizable sudden need for the school buildings was in 1921 after the right for compulsory education was stated in the law (Ståhlberh & Liakka, 1921). Another significant time in the history of the school buildings in Finland was after the wars when urbanization was booming and “big generations” were born. (Jetsonen, N.d.)

At the moment in Finland, school building and renovation processes are guided by the standards set by the Ministry of the Environments (Mertanen, 2013, 46). The Finnish Basic Education Law includes only one act that reflects to the physical school environment (Tapaninen, 2006). The law being: “Right to a safe learning environment” (Basic Education Act, 628/1998 § 29). The safety in the school environment is emphasized but it has not been specified whether it should be physically, mentally, or socially safe. Whereas the work safety law states that the working environment needs to serve its purpose and for schools it means that the environment needs to be appropriate for teaching and guiding as well as to support pupils’ learning and growth (Tapaninen, 2006). Above mentioned features reflect the purpose of the school building in Finland.

The aim of good school planning are economical solutions with both designing and upkeeping the school as well as further the quality of education (Nuikkinen, 2009, 96). That is why teachers and janitors used to have apartments either attached as a wing in the school building or separate building in the school yard (Jetsonen, N.d.). Until the beginning of 1990s Finland had norms that guided the building process as there were simplified instructions for building the schools including suggestions regarding the size, number of classrooms and other areas (Tapaninen, 2006). School buildings have followed the similar layout with long hallways that have identical classrooms on the side that have place for the teacher in front of the classroom (Tapaninen, 2006). Jetsonen (N.d.) describes the progress in the school architecture in Finland and they highlight the classrooms being the base for the schools throughout the history. Also, cafeteria, library, room for handicrafts, gym hall, toilets, dressing rooms, staffroom and corridors have kept their place in the schools (Jetsonen, N.d.). Jetsonen (N.d.) adds up that in 1950s the typical school building had a wing for the classrooms and other one for the gym hall. Cafeteria, classroom for handicrafts and club activities were often located on the ground floor and the staffroom was in a central place in the school (Jetsonen, N.d.).

The end of the 20th century brought the idea of open room schools, but the idea did not take off back then (Tapaninen, 2006). Now that the new core curriculum is emphasizing phenomenon-based learning and working together, leading schools to adjust and moving towards open room schools by removing walls between the classrooms (Hevonoja, 2019). Pulkkinen (1997) points out that the movement towards open working environments should be a process of development for the whole school. Also as special needs education is acknowledged more and more, the need for space has increased in that as well and therefore it also shapes the general layout of schools (Nuikkinen, 2009, 99).

Open learning environments are based on modern learning theories that are focused on constructivism and student's activeness in using their previous knowledge to learn new things (Ruokamo & Pohjolainen, 1999). Open environments offer students the possibility for self-guiding and interaction while giving an experience of feeling the learning community (Ruokamo & Pohjolainen, 1999). Kuuskorpi (2013) describes that the future classroom, open learning environment, should be adjustable and flexible for various usage purposes from individual working to larger group projects. In these classrooms the furniture are easy to move around and technology is used effectively to boost the classroom's opportunities (Kuuskorpi, 2013). Ruokamo and Pohjolainen (1999) add that the environment should support students goals and aims as well as offer real life problems that motivate the learning process and help in understanding the issues (Ruokamo & Pohjolainen, 1999). In these environments receiving help and feedback are crucial as well as the possibility for self-evaluation (Ruokamo & Pohjolainen, 1999).

3. Perceptions of creating school as a place

School is an important arena for both learning and socialization (Hedin, Höjer & Brunnberg, 2011). In school pupils use humour and laughter as a coping mechanism to manage the demands of school (Woods, 1990, 191 & 200). Laughter eases teaching and learning in school as it relieves the stress put on the studies and social orders (Woods, 1990, 222). In school young people have an opportunity to fulfil their need to interact with their peers (Hedin et al., 2011). However, tasks and learning that take place there often involve a long period of concentration, that might lead to boredom and exhaustion of the pupils (Woods, 1990, 205).

School consists of more than just formal learning (Gordon, 1999, 101). With the help of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (see Figure 2), the importance of safety, belonging and fulfilling oneself can be discussed as important elements that enable learning and affect experiencing school as a place. Schools must be safe environments for its users (Mertanen, 2013). Launonen and Pulkkinen (2004) continue that safe school environments enhances and makes learning and social relationships possible. Social relationships and interaction are needed in order for learning to happen (Poikonen, 1987). Savolainen (2001) discusses that the psychosocial environment in school is created by the attitudes, experiences, values, relationships, respect, safety, and other issues regarding self-esteem and learning of both students and teachers. All these aspects together form the unique experience of sense of school as a place.

Maslow is known for his theory hierarchy of needs (see Figure 2), which has given later generations the tools to observe motivation and human potential from a more positive view (Maslow, Stephens & Heil, 1998). Maslow, Stephens and Heil (1998) continue that the theory has been illustrated with a pyramid that has five levels, with self-actualization at the very top of the pyramid as it is something Maslow believed human beings aspire to be. The theory moves from bottom up, when the bottom need is secured new higher needs emerge and move up on the pyramid (Maslow & Frager, 2007).

At the bottom of the pyramid is the physiological needs that consist of the most basic of human needs such as food, water, warmth, and rest (Maslow & Frager, 2007). The next level is the need for safety, here the need for security and safety are emphasized (Maslow & Frager, 2007). Belongingness and love needs are at the middle of the pyramid on level three, these needs will rise once the two previous basic needs are fulfilled (Maslow & Frager, 2007). Maslow and Frager (2007) continue that this need is based on the need on receiving and giving affection and

when these needs are not met one will feel very lonely with the absence of friends, mates, or children and long for the feeling of belonging. Level four of the hierarchy theory is the esteem needs and it can be divided into two categories (Maslow and Frager, 2007). The first one being esteem for oneself with the desire of strength, achievements, competence etc., where the second part is desire for reputation, status, fame, appreciation and so on (Maslow & Frager, 2007). At the very top of the pyramid is the self-actualization need where one desires to become something that one is capable of for example an artist needs to paint, that is something they can do and to fulfil their needs of self-actualization they must do it (Maslow & Frager, 2007).

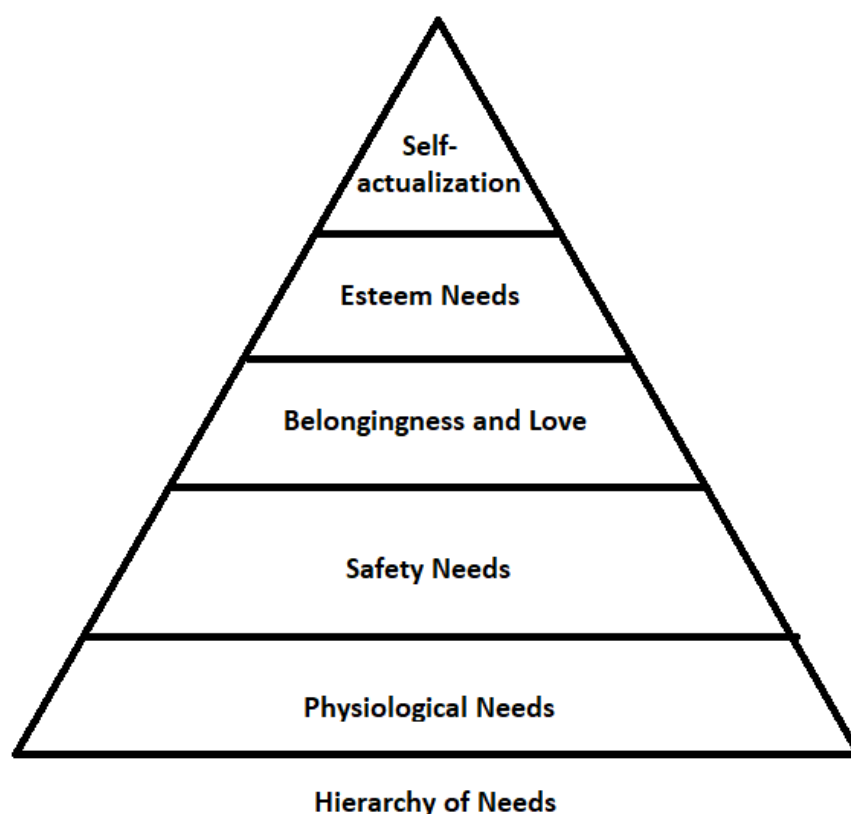


Figure 2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Maslow & Frager (2007).

3.1. Sense of Safety in School

As mentioned in the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (see Figure 2), once the physiological needs are fulfilled, then the feeling of safety and security are formed (Maslow & Frager, 2007). In the school context, the physical school building represents the stage of physiological needs in the Maslow's hierarchy, as school should be warm, clean and offer a place for rest and nutrition. Good environment to spend days in gives an opportunity to look up the security and feeling of

safety in the lives of school users. Ellis (2005) discusses that for classrooms to be good places they should supply student's security. Also, the school yard is affecting the pupil's sense of basic safety according to Hyry-Belhammer & Autti (2013) as it is increased when the school yard is safe. In Finland, in 1998 school law reform (koululakiuudistus) included the pupils right to have a safe learning environment (Lindfors, 2012) as "right to a safe learning environment" is also covered in the Finnish Basic Education Act (628/1998, 29 §).

Safety culture is built on upkeep and enhancing health and safety, through attitudes, will and acts to further safety (Mertanen, 2013, 8). Maslow and Frager (2007) demonstrate the safety needs on the second level on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, meaning the need for security, dependency, protection, structure, freedom from fear and so on. Schools safety culture is created by the headmasters and teachers attitudes towards safety issues, on how school staff commit to safety and how students can commit to working safely on their part (Mertanen, 2013, 8). Mertanen (2013, 9) continues that when it comes to safety briefing is prevention. Everyone can be a part in making a good safety culture (Mertanen, 2013, 8).

Safety and security are also components of place attachment as safety has a positive impact by creating a feeling of reduced risk (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). If one finds a certain place comfortable and secured, they are more likely to explore the surroundings and develop themselves (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Therefore, school as a place should be safe for students and teachers to feel attached to it, which leads for self-development. Next it will be discussed, how safety in school impacts students and their wellbeing, and therefore formation of a place.

In a safe school student know what they are expected of and punishments are not given without justification (Uusikylä, 2006). Uusikylä (2006) continues that a safe school does not include bullying or fear of physical harm. According to Mertanen (2013, 9) the correct learning environment is one that offers students the chance to create a positive and realistic picture of oneself, enabling a safe environment to its users. If the child does not have a feeling of safety, it affects their social development and learning negatively (Launonen & Pulkkinen, 2004). Thus, the feeling of safety is crucial for children's physical well-being but also in encouraging children to interact with others and be themselves without the fear of their surrounding (Sebba & Churchman, 1986). Sense of safety is one of the basic needs of human's and if endangered one cannot focus on higher needs (Uusikylä, 2006) as the Maslow's hierarchy of needs demonstrates.

A school should be a physically safe environment (Uusikylä, 2006). And one of the goals for safety school life is avoiding accidents as every casualty is too many (Mertanen, 2006, 60). Most accidents in schools happen during physical education and on the way to school as well as during breaktime for younger primary school students (Mertanen, 2006, 60 & 66). Most accidents that occur at school are not severe but rather minor damages (Mertanen, 2006, 66). All dangerous situations that take place in school are reported and learning from these incidents is the most effective way to prevent further accidents (Mertanen, 2006, 61).

Uusikylä (2006) demonstrates that the schools emotion climate (*tunneilmasto*) can be divided into three sections: Sense of community, the warmth of personal relationships and civilization as well as sense of safety. Sense of community meaning belonging to the group, its aims, and its values (Uusikylä, 2006). Relationships in school should be positive and encouraging in order to be referred as “warm relationships” (Uusikylä, 2006). In the last section, safety can mean both the physical and social safety for students and teachers (Uusikylä, 2006). The atmosphere in schools, should be safe and accepting, as pupils should be able to take risks and fail, which will then increase the learning outcomes (Uusikylä, 2006).

Students inner safety is most important as it is always carried with them (Uusikylä, 2006). Even when the school is filled with security cameras and guards, it does not take away student’s inner world (Uusikylä, 2006). For some students, the school might be the only place where they feel safe (Thomson, 2019). While for others it is vice versa, as schools also have students who do not feel safe, due to not feeling good enough (Uusikylä, 2006). Objectively these students might not seem as much but to these individuals the feeling of not being good enough, is filling their thoughts and creating school as an unsafe environment for them (Uusikylä, 2006). Thus, sense of safety in school is an individual experience and can be promoted or depressed depending on the physical, social, and emotional aspects present in the school. These feelings of school as a safe place, are also affecting the place attachment and creation of the place.

3.2. Social Relationships at School

The special task of the school is to educate and teach, in this process relationships are crucial, they are both the way and a tool as well as the final objective of the education (Poikonen, 1987). Social relationships and interaction between the members in the school society create the base for the schoolwork and learning (Poikonen, 1987). Even if the materials in school are pleasant

and comfortable, but the social relationships are toxic and attitudes towards learning and school are negative, the overall feeling of school will not be positive (Enqvist, 1987).

For students, school is not just a place where they attend lessons, but also a space for social interaction where hierarchies, relationships and roles in the society are formed (Kiilakoski, 2012). Kiilakoski (2012) continues that school is therefore a platform where pupils meet other people of their age and together, they create social relationships and build up their self-image. Students try preventing being alone in a crowd by collecting one or more friends (Gordon, 1999, 113). Gordon (1999, 113) states that some of these friends are just companions to keep company and socialise at school, while others are so close that they meet after school. Gordon (1999, 113) reminds that conflicts may be combined into these friendships when different people at school try to get along and spend time together. Sharing everyday life sorrows and joys bring the group together as well as helps in getting through difficulties and emphasises the joy (Gordon, 1999, 113).

The company of others is a factor that makes the sense of school comfortable with having something safe and familiar (Gordon, 1999, 113). Apart from shared experiences, also the group identity created on the basis on cultural and historical belonging when people find commonality in the hope of fitting in (Leach, 2005). These shared experiences and feelings of belonging are common for the group and part of the individuals place formation as the Gustafson's Three-Pole Triangular Model (see Figure 1) explains that collective memories and interaction with others is one of the three key aspects in the creation of the place (Lien, 2015). Shared experience and interaction can be linked to the environment and/or be reflected by oneself leading for unique interpretation with shared base (Lien, 2015). However, it is important to note that identity is the effect of performance as one may reshape their identities through their performance (Leach, 2005).

The relationships between a student and their teacher is more complex and ongoing (Ramsey, 1991, 170). Classrooms offer stories, games and discussions that let the children form relationships as well as analyze their social relations and give the chance to observe those objectively (Ramsey, 1991, 170). School is dynamic and active place, in which various people, like teachers and students, communicate in multiple ways (Poikonen, 1987). Conflicts that occur in the classroom are part of the development happening in the classroom as students learn to coordinate perspectives and needs of their own as well as their peers (Ramsey, 1991, 164). Teachers are role models to their students as pupils reflect their teacher's social orientations

and behavior (Ramsey, 1991, 130). Teachers have opportunities and responsibilities in the social construction of the classrooms and schools as places and this is one of the reasons why it is important for educators to understand students' experiences in shaping their place formation (Ellis, 2005).

Thus, belonging, and social relationships formed in school are important in the creation of identity and place. Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2011) have studied that students' sense of belonging to the school, is positively related to their motivation, satisfaction, and positive affect. As mentioned in the Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow & Frager, 2007) belonging and positively meaningful relationships are important in one's self-actualization but before focusing on those, the base of safety and physical needs must be fulfilled. Interaction and socialization take place in the locale level as Agnew, Shelley & Pringle (2003) remind. Agnew, Shelley & Pringle (2003) share the idea of a *locale* level and its' material dimension with Leach (2005), who emphasizes architecture having also an important social role (Leach, 2005). The *locale* is happening in a *location* and together with individuals' interpretations (*sense of place*) they are making a place (Agnew, Shelley & Pringle, 2003).

3.3. Arena for Learning

In schools' students' task is to learn and obey the set rules, while teachers observe that the rules are being followed (Jokinen, 2002). There teachers, pupils, and school staff are interacting together daily (Enqvist, 1987). Once teachers enter the space, they create a learning environment (Laine, 1999, 119). Teachers are those who enable the learning, even though nowadays their role in the classroom has shifted more towards motivating and guiding students (Enqvist, 1987). Hedin and colleagues (2010) research on understanding the meaning of school to young people in foster care in Sweden demonstrated that foster children placed in preparatory classes had a higher desire to learn the language, than those who did not attend school. These findings express the significance of the school and how the environment has an important role in the learning experience and motivation.

Widdowson, Dixon, Peterson, Rubie-Davies and Irving (2015) conducted a research on understanding the purpose of schooling from students, teachers and parents' point of view in New Zealand. The students in the research were aged between 13 and 15 years and they were selected from schools that were identified into three different socio-economic areas (high, middle, and low) (Widdowson et al., 2015). All students, no matter the district, believed that

school was for academic learning, maximise life chances and quality of life and enable future employment as well as economic wellbeing (Widdowson et al., 2015). Interestingly, students from the low socio-economic area did not believe school to support the development of self-knowledge and development of life and social skills like the two other groups (Widdowson et al., 2015).

In order to maximise life chances, improve quality of life, learn, and develop oneself, the basic needs, presented in the Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see Figure 2) (Maslow & Frager, 2007), must be fulfilled. This includes also the second highest level, esteem needs, that is about setting achievable goals and having respect and acceptance from others (Maslow & Frager, 2007). Further, Ellis (2005) mentions that classrooms should provide space for student's creative self-development in addition to safety, nurturance, meaningful relationships, and opportunities for positive identities in order to be good places. These elements are found from the base of the hierarchy of needs and at the top of the pyramid is the self-actualisation, that is about reaching the level of self-fulfilment that one is capable of achieving (Maslow & Frager 2007). Motivation and supporting factors among the needs discussed in the lower levels, assist to acquire topmost level of the hierarchy. Lavonen, Korhonen, Kukkonen and Sormunen (2014) present that innovative learning methods, where students themselves get the chance to plan their learning and working, while working in small groups with assigned roles, support the learning process and gives motivation. Acknowledging students' personal interests and learning methods can also be used to boost one's motivation (Lavonen et al., 2014). Interestingly students', parents' and teachers' attitudes and expectations about the purposes of schooling are influencing students' beliefs and attitudes towards learning and impacting their motivation and behaviour in school (Widdowson et al., 2015).

School society can be divided into social and physical aspects (Enqvist, 1987). Kiilakoski, Kivijärvi, Gretschel, Laine and Merikivi (2011) add that these two are separate phenomena but do have a strong relation. The physical school culture is often seen as restricting by students (Gordon, 1999, 108). However, important factors for enabling students learning are the physical spaces and architecture of the school (Seppälä-Pänkäläinen, 2009). Enqvist (1987) adds that the school building creates the material environment to the atmosphere in the school, stating that the history, architecture, decorations, and teaching materials give a special atmosphere and feeling to the school. Furthermore, Gordon (1999, 108) continues that schools also build many emotions, but emotions and the physical school has not been discussed or researched much.

Ellis (2005) states that school and classroom can obtain an emotional significance in negative or positive nature for its users. Widdowson and colleagues (2014) received positive findings in their research as some students described school as being fun (Widdowson et al., 2014), whereas Gordon (1999, 107) received some quite the opposite response where school was seen as a jail, but one that you could get out of. According to Gordon (1999, 113) there are differences in how girls and boys express their emotions in the school environment. Boys emotions are expressed more in the school environment as boys are usually more physical and noisier, while quieter boys are easily forgotten with their emotions (Gordon, 1999, 113). Girls are seen to enjoy school and generally they adjust easily to the environment, although these findings can be questioned when earlier mentioned about girls not using their voice or space (Gordon, 1999, 113).

Students need to adapt into the school customs, because at school one needs to be one along others (Gordon, 1999, 112). It can be challenging, as students remain being part of the group, even when the work is to be completed individually (Gordon, 1999, 112). Being a member of a group does not only include teachers and other students, as there are other staff working in the school environment, like janitors, food service assistant and nurses, that are also affecting the social relationships happening at school (Poikonen, 1987). These relationships can either positively boost the atmosphere with a positive attitude and working together, or they can have a negative impact by breaking and harming already established relationships (Poikonen, 1987). The relationship between belonging to a group and individuality can be tense and some negative feelings connected to the matter are caused by an ambivalence (Gordon, 1999, 112).

Often students use metaphors describing school as a total institution, like being a jail (Gordon, 1999, 107 & 112). They are usually highlighting the limitations of school, rather than observing what it can offer. (Gordon, 1999, 112.) Students sense of place is created over time in schools, if their experiences are having routines that build their confidence, improve relationships, help to gain local knowledge, and understand the norms of the society (Ellis, 2005). Teachers who want students' sense of school to be positive, must consider the entire experience of being in school (Ellis, 2005). Ellis (2005) emphasizes especially creative self-development, positive identities, social interaction, and belonging being important features present in the formation of school as a positive place. Widdowson and colleagues (2014) research demonstrated that those students whose sense of school was aligned with the common understanding of school's purpose, learning, had a stronger personal commitment towards their studies, leading to have

higher motivation and more positive behaviour, thus they felt that their school related goals were achievable.

3.4. Working in a School Environment

The school community differs from other workplaces by having students and teachers in the same institution while having a very different role in it (Savolainen, 2001). It is important to remember that many workers from different fields work in the school environment in addition to teachers and principals such as special needs assistants (koulunkäyntiavustajat), personal assistants, nurses and psychologist as well as the maintenance staff including janitors, cleaners and kitchen staff (Mertanen, 2013, 16). Savolainen (2001) continues by stating about the roles in the school environment that teachers oversee the school activities and are paid while students are there because of the compulsory education. As there are workers under different employer's, communication and collaboration are key in order to create a safe environment (Mertanen, 2013, 16).

The working environment has a big effect on wellbeing, when the working environment is good the focus can be set on working (Mertanen, 2013, 28). In a good, constructive school community, the members feel safe and secured, whereas in a school environment that is filled with conflicts and disagreements, the working might feel distressing (Poikonen, 1987). Also, the relationships and tensions between the adults in school have a strong impact on the entire school community (Poikonen, 1987). Primary school teachers have evaluated the atmosphere and collaboration to be the best sector in their working conditions and the physical working environment to be the weakest (Onnismaa, 2010, 10). As many features impact the pupils place formation, likewise these elements impact also teachers' and other school staffs' experience of school as a place.

In the school environment teachers are in charge of the space and control the usage of it. However, they may use the space in various ways depending on their teaching subject, pedagogical views, or their personal preferences (Gordon, 1999, 112). During the workday teachers tend to move a lot in the space of their classroom, although if presented with a conflict between teacher and students, the teacher feels as if their movement in the space is limited (Gordon, 1999, 106). Space is additionally seen as ground for solving and defining different relationships, as well as conflicts that happen in the space, there the teacher must take their role

in the spatial (tilallinen) environment to fulfil the natural hierarchy between teacher and students (Gordon, 1999, 105).

Teachers comment that students are the best thing about their work (Mertanen, 2013, 18). In Savolainen's (2001) research teachers reported that they cared for their students and their needs, while most students did not feel as if the teachers truly cared for how they were doing. Mertanen (2013, 16) noticed that healthy students gave strength to their teachers to accomplish the teaching. However, recently the wellbeing of teachers has been broadly discussed due to constant changes in the field and large workload (Mertanen, 2013, 18, 19). Noise, catcalling by the students and hurry are all false sides of teaching profession that teachers list when asked for the negatives of their profession (Gordon, 1999, 104). Furthermore, this leads to the feeling of not being good enough in the work field (Mertanen, 2013, 19). Keeping these observations in mind, the students are both, enriching and tiring for the teacher (Gordon, 1999, 103).

Teachers who see the classroom to be students' space primarily, see the space as their own by being responsible of its order and functionality (Gordon, 1999, 105). Savolainen (2001) demonstrates that questionnaires have been held at schools where the results between students and teachers have given significantly different results. Where teachers have said to enjoy their working community and job whereas most students said they were not enjoying themselves in the community (Savolainen, 2001). In the research conducted by Widdowson and colleagues (2014) it was found that all teachers regardless of the socio-economical area of the school believed that students attended school due to societal norms and social purposes. The significant difference was on how teachers from the low socio-economical areas emphasised that most students came to school to learn while the teachers from high socio-economical area did not mention learning at all (Widdowson et al., 2014).

Gordon (2013, 103) explains how space can be seen as a metaphor in teachers' speech when discussing about freedom and boundaries, but nevertheless space is a key element in interaction. There are students in the school, who are louder and occupy the space (Gordon, 1999, 104). Catcalling and noise by students are part of the way space is used, as well as a part of the freedom that school offers, and usually these occupying students are not the ones sitting quietly behind their desks in excellent posture (Gordon, 1999, 104). Teachers refer to space as something that needs to be put in order while at the same time it needs to be shared (Gordon, 1999, 105). These partly contradict experiences and expectations of the school reflect the school's challenging role as a place in the teachers' lives.

4. School as an interactive place in society

Schools follow school policies set by the government (koulutuspolitiikka) guided by the cities set instructions (Seppälä-Pänkäläinen, 2009). Therefore, school can be seen as an organization or community that can be observed together as they are always a part of a bigger scale in society and political picture (Seppälä-Pänkäläinen 2009,). One of the aims set for schools is to bring up youth to become responsible citizens and adults (Gordon, 1999, 99). Savolainen (2001) understands that the school organisation can impact the operating principles (toimintaperiaate), working procedures (käytännön toimintatapa) and rules, however the school cannot control the society factors that shape the school environment.

Laws and restrictions guide schools and therefore it is important to understand these statements in order to fully understand the concept of school and place. Helander (2015) deliberates that equality is emphasised in the Finnish education policy and its job is to guarantee everyone the right to civilisation and high quality, free of charge education regardless of their origin, background, or wealth. Thus, in order to fully understand how schools' function and who give the regulations for schools to act, the agreements regarding basic education in Finland need to be observed and presented. Also, it is important to take a look into how school is seen from different perspectives to fully understand how school as a place can be seen and felt. The society has a huge impact on how school is seen, and also parents might have various perspectives. In spring 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic challenged the role of school as the government in Finland issued remote learning and teaching (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö, 2020). This decision raised discussion as there were contradict opinions about the school's role and purpose in the society and for individuals. As Lahelma (1999, 81) states, school should socialize students with the norms, values and duties set by the society as well as raise individuals with high autonomy.

The location of school is also a relevant question to ponder on as it is an important factor in the formation of place (Agnew, Shelley & Pringle, 2003). The location can also have a strong influence on the area and the people living there. For instance, some districts have a lower socio-economical background and as Vainikainen et al. (2017) mentions it is seen that especially the mother's higher education background does have a positive effect on their children and their educational level. As parents' thoughts and ideologies are often transferred to their children it is also important to take a look on parents' attitudes towards school as a place and how that could possibly be reflected on how students experience school as a place.

4.1. Agreements Regarding Basic Education in Finland

In the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, Article 26), it is stated that everyone has the right to free education in the primary level and that it should be obligatory. Also, higher education should be equally accessible for all based on their merits (The United Nations, 1948, Article 26). Powell, Werum and Steelman (2004, 134) state that when higher education is based on the merits, it can lead to competition and families with higher socio-economic backgrounds to choose private schools for their children. Due to the school choice families can choose the neighbourhood and school their child attend, this again increases the inequality in the society according to Powell, Werum and Steelman (2004, 134). However, parents do have the right to choose their children's education (The United Nations, 1948, Article 26 Act 3). In addition to this, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child the State Parties have agreed to give educational and vocational guidance as well as encourage attendance at schools in order to cut down the drop-out rates (The United Nations, 1989, Article 28, Act 1). In the convention itself the importance of school in the society is emphasized. School is viewed to be a place where pupils should go regularly, as it is part of their daily lives.

In the Finnish Basic Education Act the objective of the education is to promote equality and civilisation (sivistys) while supporting pupil's growth into humanity and into ethically responsible membership of society, providing them the knowledge and skills needed in life (Basic Education Act, 628/1998 § 2). The Finnish objective for the education is in line with the United Nation's (1948) Human Rights declaration as it mentions that:

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (Article 26, Act 2)

School is a physical space that has been given responsibility to fulfil the objectives of education, by having a clear aim and educational purpose, the building is identified as a school. In order to have deeper meaning in people's lives, people must attach personal experiences to define school (Tuan, 2001, 171). Once an individual has attached personal meanings into a space, it becomes a place (Tuan, 2001, 171).

4.2. Central Place Theory and Location of School

Hyry-Beihammer, Hiltunen and Estola (2014) demonstrate that when schools are shutdown, relocated or built, the subject of a place should be truly taken into consideration on several different perceptions the size, location, school grounds, environment as well as the distance for students to travel to school from home. All these factors are significant when discussing student's wellbeing and enjoyment in school (Hyry-Beihammer, Hiltunen & Estola, 2014). King (1985) states that countries have used the central place theory when planning the school district boundaries and school locations. Central place theory aims to explain spatial arrangements and distribution of human settlements as well as their number (King, 1985). Walter Christaller developed this theory in 1933 due to believing that there was a logic between these factors: Size, number, and distribution (King, 1985). King (1985) continues that Christaller used the hexagon pattern to formulate the hierarchy of central places, where the highest limit of his range was the furthest place the population was willing to travel to gain a good. It was shown that there was more willingness to travel further when the good was more expensive, whereas for everyday goods that were cheaper, the distance that people were ready to travel for where shorter (King, 1985). However, King (1985) explains that when discussing the central place theory and central place functions schools are often forgotten from the discussion.

The Basic Education Act (628/1998 § 6) states that the municipalities need to organize their education in such way that round-trip travel between home and school or other places of education, as well as public transport is safe and as short as possible. This can be seen in Finland with students attending to neighbourhood schools (*lähikoulu*), that are located near their homes. However, the neighbourhood school may not geographically be the closest to the home of the student (Oulun kaupunki, 2020). Local authorities assign the child of compulsory school age to attend to their neighbourhood school or other appropriate school, where the student can receive teaching in their native language that the municipality is obligated to provide education in (Basic Education Act, 628/1998 § 6). For example, city of Oulu (Oulun kaupunki, 2020) states that students' school varies with the residential area of the student. City of Oulu has divided its 45 primary schools into four basic education districts that guide the selection of students into their neighbourhood school (Oulun Kaupunki, 2020).

Parents may apply their children into a school that is not their neighbourhood school (Oulun Kaupunki 2020). There are also schools that choose their students from all over the city if

parents have applied their children in them, for example, Oulu International School and Oulu Steiner School in Oulu (Oulun Kaupunki, 2020). Often parents have the hope of a better education or a speciality that the school offers. However, research conducted by Vainikainen and colleagues (2017) demonstrated that at the moment the differences between schools and their outcomes are not significantly different, but it can change in the future and therefore it is something that should be taken under surveillance.

Vainikainen and colleagues (2017) research was conducted in Helsinki metropolitan area, where they discovered as one observation, that the areas of the city where families had settled into, impacts the students' know-how (osaaminen) and performance in school. For the research, the area was divided into three sectors capital city area (pääkaupunkiseutu), growing areas (kasvukunta) and boarder area (reuna-alue). The questionnaire was held in fall 2011 in the seventh grade and the same students participated to the research in spring 2014 in the ninth grade (Vaininkainen et al., 2017). The study showed that the know-how at the beginning of the seventh grade was a bit higher in the capital city area, while the lowest in the growing areas (Vainikainen et al., 2017). However, the improvement of the know-how was fastest in the growing areas, while it was slowest in the border areas, where the mother's educational level was the lowest (Vainikainen et al., 2017). In the capital city area, the increase in know-how seemed to be a little lower than in the other areas (Vainikainen et al., 2017). Thus, the know-how had a correlation with the educational level of the mother as well as it was linked to the location of the school. This demonstrates that the location of where the family was settled in influenced student's ability to perform in school. Students performance is seen to affect how students feel in school and therefore in the formation of school as a place in a positive or negative point of view (Leach, 2005; Lien. 2009).

The significance of location and how it affects school was seen in a research by Beihammer and Autti (2013), who conducted it in small village cities in Finland. The research pointed out that some students felt school to be a place of boredom (Beihammer & Autti, 2013). This might be due to the lack of stimuli in schools, because students who lived in the villages had a lot of hands-on-activities and everyday problems to solve at their home environment, whereas school with its' task felt more abstract (Beihammer & Autti, 2013). Beihammer and Autti (2013) suggest that home environment changes depending on the location of the family living in, for example children living in the countryside have more stimuli and hands-on tasks to solve, compared to those staying in the urban environment. Therefore, it is seen that the location of the family can also have significant influence on the formation of place in the school

environment as students have different environments around the classrooms and school buildings.

The location of the schools offers different possibilities to use resources available outside the school, like museums, theaters, and nature, to engage students learning. Those opportunities and perceptions created to the school are impacted by the location, which is one of the key elements in the place formation according to Agnew, Shelley & Pringle (2003). The location is the base for the *locale* level and individuals' experiences and shapes both (Agnew, Shelley & Pringle, 2003). Additionally, Gustafson's Three-Pole Triangular model (see Figure 1) perceives environment as one of the three factors impacting the place formation, along with others and self (Lien, 2009). While with the help of the central place theory schools can be located in areas that are user friendly and safe (King, 1985).

4.3. Parents Attitudes Towards School

In order to understand the ambiguous nature of place formation in students' lives, it is important to notice that parents' experiences and attitudes affect their children's experiences (Widdowson et al., 2014)). Also, parents might have very different definition to school as a place than teachers' or administration have. Generally, in Finland schools are very appreciated and are part of parents' everyday lives (Hilasvuori, 2002, 19). Tyler (1983, 462) states that parents often identified school as the place where their children were to be educated in. Many parents do believe that the opportunity for education (*kouluttautumismahdollisuus*), safety and well-being are the most important factors for their child/children in school, even if the importance of equality was decreased (Penttilä 1994, 13). It seems that parents trust schools and their children's teachers (Hilasvuori, 2002, 19).

There are contradict research about parents' attitudes affecting their children's sense of school. According to Widdowson and colleagues (2015) parents' attitudes and expectations of school are affecting their children's behaviour, attitudes, and motivation in school. Widdowson and colleagues (2015) do not specify whether parents' experiences of school as a place are positive or negative, but they are seen to affect their children's sense of place and acting in school. Hilasvuori (2002), in turn notes that parents' negative experiences of school do not affect their children's sense of school negatively. Thus, according to Hilasvuori (2002) negative experiences are not transferred to the next generation, whereas Widdowson and colleagues

(2015) are stating that parents' attitudes are reflected in their children's place formation and behaviour.

Parents believe that schools provide bring up, gives information and skills to their children, despite occasional minor problems, schools bring up decent citizens (Hilasvuori, 2002, 19). This was also seen as one of the main reasons why parents sent their children to school as it was thought "to conform to societal norms, to socialise with peers and to learn" (Widdowson et al., 2014). Widdowson and colleagues (2014) found out that both, parents, and teachers identified academic learning to be the key role of school, while developing students' self-knowledge was seen as an important task of the school only by the parents from high-income areas.

Hilasvuori (2002, 20) emphasise the importance of cooperation between parents and teachers. Nowadays in Finland the relationship between the school and the parents is emphasized and it should be equal like in a partnership (Lindroos, 2004, 206). Both school and parents share the educational responsibility, by sharing values and aims of the education (Lindroos, 2004, 206). The more positive experiences and relationships parents and students have, the higher the social capital is (Launonen, Pohjola & Holma, 2004, 95). If the parents know each other, it impacts the atmosphere in the classroom and school (Launonen, Pohjola & Holma, 2004, 98). Once parents know what happens in school, the shared knowledge and experiences help parents to feel involved in the school days, leading for greater understanding of the pupil's school life (Launonen, Pohjola & Holma, 2004, 98). Also, others, like parents, affect a place formation of students (Lien, 2009) and thus it is important to understand the parents' impact to their children and environment.

Some parents have lost faith in the centralized institutions due to a lot of bureaucracy, and therefore have created advocacy groups to further their cause (Penttilä 1994, 13). Overall, parents still expect school to be socially and physically safe place, in contrast to the unsafe adult world (Penttilä 1994, 14). There have been discussions in Finland that parents should be taken back to school for a few days, to make students life easier and help with the cooperation between home and school as Härkönen (2019) points out. As noted, there are many different approaches towards school amongst parents. Those experiences seem to affect their children's sense of place in the school environment as well as the parents' own place formation.

Some parents choose to home school their children. These parents tend to have above average level of education (Basham, Merrified & Hepburn, 2007). Also, usually families that choose

home schooling are two parent families (Basham, Merrified & Hepburn, 2007). Basham, Merrified and Hepburn (2007) defined home schooling the following way: When a child of compulsory education age participates in their education at home instead of attending public or other type of school. Research showed that home school parents chose this form of teaching because they felt that they should have an active role in their children's education and have the ability to help them succeed in their learning (Green & Hoover-Dempsey, 2007). Green & Hoover-Dempsey (2007) continue by adding that parents need to be very involved when home schooling.

Myllymäki (2017, 68) conducted a research on home school parents that showed that the parents thought that home was a better environment for their children to learn in with the average of 3.94 (min 1, max 5). Sabol (2018) adds that home schooling gives parents the opportunity to create a unique learning environment that supports their child's needs. Whereas "the school building does not meet our hopes" was one of the least significant factors in choosing home schooling with an average of 2,03 (Myllymäki 2017, 67). So, the school building as a space, was seen to be an environment that is suitable for learning and therefore not being the reason to choose home schooling over regular school. Myllymäki (2017, 70) stated that the study also showed that factors regarding the child and parents were more significant compared to factors of the school when making the decision to stay at home and study. This might lead for very different understanding of the school as a place, as the learning environment is home instead of a physical school building.

The same questionnaire conducted by Myllymäki (2017, 64) showed that most families that had chosen home schooling in Finland had a short distance (less than 3km) to their nearest school. Therefore, long distance to the school was not a reason for parents to choose home schooling over regular school, even though it obeys the central place theory with need and distance. This raises a question of the factors affecting parents' decisions of choosing home school. Home schooling differs from regular schooling and this has an impact on pupil's sense of place in the school environment.

5. Discussion

Places hold lots of personal experiences, feelings and meanings, the link connecting a person and a place is identity, therefore place can have a strong effect on identifying one's identity (Hyry-Beihammer & Autti, 2013). Through this thesis it has been discovered that the more the subject of place is being pondered on the more there are different viewpoints, as neither school nor place are unambiguous. Everyday events take place in places with different people and that is what shape us to be who we are (Hyry-Beihammer & Autti, 2013). This is also the reason that looking at school as a place is an important viewpoint.

As this research is conducted based on literature available, the reliability depends on the reliability of sources used. All sources have been picked out carefully while paying attention to their reliability. As this research was completed by two researchers, it enabled dialogue and critical thinking. These have also increased the reliability of this research. Researchers always aim at being objective, and they have certain mindset when reading and referring to the sources. Anyone can go and take a look into same sources; however, one's interpretation may vary from others. This research had its own limitations and one main challenge was the lack of previous research on the topic. Due to this the material for this research has been collected from several different sources and combined together.

Our first sub research question was "What are place and space? How are they presented in a physical school environment?" According to Gieryn (2000, 464-465) space is a physical area that turns into a place once the sentimental value is attached to it. Places are created through personal interpretations and therefore they are unique and dynamic, as they change when time goes on (Hyry-Beihammer, Hiltunen & Estola, 2014; Lien, 2009). In the Gustafson's Three-Pole Triangular model (see Figure 1) Lien (2009) presents the interdependence of self, others and environment in the people and their surroundings. Schools are built and decorated in a way that helps them fulfil the learning objectives of the time (Gordon, 1999, 10). Elements like, noise, temperature and lighting all impact the physical atmosphere in school (Savolainen, 2001). The physical atmosphere includes the material aspect in the place formation, that is part of the *locale* level of place formation according to Agnew, Shelley and Pringle (2003), once the personal attachment and experiences are connected to the space, it turns into a meaningful place (Tuan 2001).

The second research question was "What aspects in school are important in the creation of place?" As school is a place for formal and informal learning, it includes also social and cultural

functions (Gordon, 1999, 101). We used the Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see Figure 2) to understand the physiological needs, safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization in school. These basic needs are present in school and they impact the learning as well as the place formation. In order to have a great learning environment that enables the self-actualization, all the lower levels in the pyramid must be secured (Maslow & Frager, 2007). If one or more of the lower levels are absent, it impacts the creation of a school as a positive place.

Lastly, we researched the link between society and school as a place. Our research question was "How does society impact school as a place?" There are various agreements that are justifying the school system, for example the Human Rights and Rights of the Child (The United Nations, 1989, Article 28; The United Nations, 1948, Article 26). As governments set objectives for education, the teacher's job is to help transfer the values and knowledge to their students (Savolainen, 2001; Seppälä-Pänkäläinen, 2009). Thus, society is creating the framework for schools. In society the neighbourhood, location and parents are also impacting the sense of place in schools (Beihammer & Autti, 2013; Vainikainen et al., 2017; Widdowson et al., 2014). Parents active participation can affect the atmosphere in the school and can create warmer and more positive classroom experience to the students (Launonen, Pohjola & Holma, 2004, 95). Based on the research conducted by Widdowson and colleagues (2014) students viewed that school gave them tools for their relationships, citizenship, and community participation. Therefore, society offers both, the base for school and the platform to use the skills learned in school.

Our main research question was "What makes a school a place?" As it has been mentioned multiple times place is a combination of several aspects. According to Agnew, Shelley and Pringle (2003) place consists of *location*, *locale* meaning the social interaction and material setting as well as *sense of place*. Gustafson's Three-Pole Triangular Model (see Figure 1) demonstrated how experiences in different places are affecting the sense of place, as it is a dynamic process depending on the time and person creating the place (Lien, 2009). For example, some students may find the school environment the most important factor when creating school as a place, while to other students the relationships with their peers may play the most important part in the creation of place. In order to have a positive and whole place formation to the school, one needs to fulfil the stages mentioned in the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (see Figure 2). All in all, it can be stated that student's creation of school as a place consists of many different factors and it is a personal experience that only one can encounter.

Due to COVID-19 virus outbreak in Spring 2020, the schools in Finland applied remote learning in schools (Eskonen, de Fresnes & Pietarinen, 2020). This decision to organize remote learning shared opinions and raised a lot of discussion. Some felt that inequality had increased during the remote learning as some families had been able to support their children, whereas challenging home conditions and lack of support had also left students behind (Eskonen, de Fresnes & Pietarinen, 2020). Remote learning required new skills from students as suddenly they were in charge of controlling their learning (Eskonen, de Fresnes & Pietarinen, 2020). The Trade Union of Education in Finland stated that remote teaching should not be a long-lasting solution for teaching (OAJ, 2020). Contact teaching is required in order to fulfil the purpose of school, as school should support students to humanity and be critically and ethically responsible citizens (OAJ, 2020). According to the Trade Union of Education, the school creates an important social environment outside home and this environment is especially important if there are no other social circles available (OAJ, 2020). Remote learning challenges the role of school as a place, as there the place changes into a home environment from school. This raises the question of: How does remote learning impact the creation of school as a place? This could be an interesting topic to research in the future and possibly reflect on home schooling as well.

Another current discussion related to school as a place is one regarding the condition of school buildings in Finland. Uusivaara (2019) brings up the Minister of Education Li Andersson's concerns for the severe situation of mould schools in many cities in Finland and reminds municipalities to fix these schools. Many students have had to study in temporary buildings for several years as they have been evacuated from their schools (Jaskari, 2017; Turtola, 2018). This leads to wonder if the experience of school as a place in these temporary buildings is different compared to a "normal" school as the learning environment has a large impact in the school experience. As in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see Figure 2) it is demonstrated that the basic needs must be fulfilled before self-actualisation, learning for instance, can happen and in a school that is not safe and healthy, the physiological and safety needs are not reached (Maslow & Frager, 2007). Turtola (2018) opens-up the temporary school students' experiences, saying that those students described school to be too hot during the summertime and vice versa, too cold during the winters, this already does not fulfill the basic physiological needs according to Maslow and Frager (2007). This topic could be elaborated into further research as it is a current problem and there is no research on how these temporary schools influence sense of place in school context or school as a place.

Other possible topics for future research regarding school and place would be how other staff members working in the school environment sense school as a place. As while conducting this research it was brought to our attention that there is no such research existing and overall, there is very little research regarding these important people working and enabling the school experience. As we are studying in the Intercultural Teacher Education program, we are extremely interested in seeing the formation of school as a place from a more global viewpoint. We would be interested in comparing how the understanding of school as a place varies between countries, cultures or even economies, or does it differ at all. This is something we are hoping to research in our master's thesis by conducting a questionnaire or possibly interview research.

In a life that emphasises efficiency and busy schedules, it is important to wonder, what things in life and school are actually meaningful (Rask, 2001, 188). School system should promote the wellbeing, communality, and sense of safety in school. It should give skills and knowledge to the students as well as tools to navigate in the changing society (Rask, 2001, 188). What people expect and need from the school varies (Widdowson et al., 2014). Thus, it is important to understand what school means to different people and how its role in people's lives change through time and experiences. Understanding diverse experiences and interpretations leads for a wider perspective to discuss about school and its multi-meaningful nature.

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